



Henderson County Department of Public Health

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Questions/ Comments about COVID-19

Updated April 9, 2020

The following are questions and comments received from members of the media and general public:

Question: April 2, 2020

Why can't the public know what town the virus patients came from? I think that would be a good reality check and make folks more cautious. Raleigh and Charlotte share more specific details.

A: We believe that would invite unneeded and potentially incorrect speculation and stigma. It's also likely that people could have a false sense of security if there are no identified cases in their immediate area. We need for all neighborhoods in Henderson County to assume community spread and follow the guidelines provided for social distance and staying home wherever possible.

Comment: April 2, 2020

In addition to "total cases" of county COVID-19 cases, it would be far more useful to have #of hospitalizations, # of ventilated, # of discharged, # of recovered. Current method of reporting only total cases will only and always be a rising number and may seem more ominous than broader range facts would show.

A: The Health Department has been specifically asked to share the number of positive cases, so the community feels informed. We will look into your suggestions, but please know that the priority of our clinicians at this time must be to focus on the important work they're doing to stop the spread of the virus and provide patient care.

NC DHHS is collecting data from hospitals, their website is www.ncdhhs.gov

You are correct that it will also be helpful to share positive messages and we have been doing that as well.

Question: April 1, 2020

When will you post on your website where people can get masks, respirators and other medical equipment?

A: At this time, any medical equipment, especially masks, are needed for our healthcare workers and first responders. We need them to stay healthy so they can take care of our community. When there comes a time when things like masks are plentiful again, that information would be shared with the public.

Question: March 27, 2020

What if I feel sick but my symptoms are very mild?

A: At this time, the guidance around testing recommends that people stay home if they have mild symptoms. One way to look at it: ask yourself, if you had these symptoms 6 months ago, would you go to a doctor? If not, stay home.

Question: March 27, 2020

What's the difference between quarantine and isolation?

A: Quarantine vs Isolation: "Quarantine" is for persons who are not sick and have no symptoms but have been exposed to someone who is showing symptoms or has tested positive. Those people should remain at home and limit exposures for 14 days. If after 14 days they aren't showing symptoms, they should still stay at home if at all possible- as we are recommending- for social distancing.

“Isolation” is for persons who are sick and have symptoms. Those people should remain at home for a minimum of 7 days, with the last 3 days being asymptomatic. If their symptoms persist beyond 7 days, they still need to remain at home until they are 3 days post-symptomatic.

Question: March 26, 2020

Can you give an update on how many tests we have, if/when we are getting more, and if the testing sites will reopen?

A: We have a limited number of test kits, but enough to meet current demands for high risk patients as determined by NC DHHS guidance: testing only high priority patients, which at this time includes healthcare personnel, hospital patients and long-term care facilities. Our hope is that testing capacity will increase in the next couple of weeks to broaden testing options. We’re working closely with both hospitals to coordinate and are prepared to assist them if and when it’s determined it’s appropriate to re-open the screening sites.

Comment: March 25 and 27, 2020

People are frustrated that they have to remain isolated while waiting for their results.

A: Anyone who received testing was informed of the guidelines around isolation and were given paperwork which describes the guidelines in detail. Persons with symptoms should continue to follow the isolation guidelines.: remain in isolation for a minimum of 7 days, with the last 3 days being asymptomatic. If their symptoms persist beyond 7 days, they still need to remain isolated until they are 3 days post-symptomatic.

Comment: March 25 and 27, 2020

People are frustrated that it’s taking so long to get test results.

A: Please know that the delay in receiving results is frustrating for all of us, and it's not a problem specific to our area. We have no control over the laboratories that are processing the tests. People will be called when their tests come in, whether the test is positive or negative- we’re calling everybody tested at the BRCC site. AdventHealth is calling the people they tested. *UPDATE 4/9/20:* This has improved, and results are now being returned within 2-3 business days.

The following questions were asked through a survey created by the Health Department compiled through Survey Monkey between March 26- April 2:

Q: How are health care workers are staying safe?

A: They are using precautions and personal protective equipment (PPE). Since there is a nationwide shortage of PPE, facilities are looking at ways to extend their available PPE. Locally, hospitals have been accepting donations of PPE from the community. There is also a process for facilities to request PPE, that link is on our website. There are also guidelines available such as taking the temperature of everyone that comes in the door.

Q: How are staff at the county and other essential businesses/agencies distancing from one another as they work?

A: The www.NCDHHS.gov website offers guidelines for businesses and healthcare facilities about how to keep employees safe. These recommendations include measures like taking temperature of all people who enter the building, additional cleaning and sanitizing, sitting further apart when people need to be in the same room.

Q: Isn't the flu worse than coronavirus?

A: Coronavirus has been found to be more contagious, and people can be carriers without having symptoms. It’s for this reason that we need people to stay home and away from others outside their homes as much as possible.

Q: I live with someone who is sick right now. Do I need to be tested?

A: If the person you live with has symptoms of COVID-19 they need to isolate from you and call their provider. Persons with symptoms should follow the isolation guidelines: remain in isolation for a minimum of 7 days, with the last 3 days being asymptomatic. If their symptoms persist beyond 7 days, they still need to remain isolated until they are 3 days post-symptomatic.

Q: What am I supposed to do about childcare for my kids?

A: This is a concern for many people in our community. Please call 1-888-600-1685 to get connected with the right fit for you and your child.

Q: Why is everything shut down if most people won't be very sick?

Q: Doesn't this all seem like overkill?

A: No, it does not. Some of the people who do become very sick need to be hospitalized, and many of those people will require ventilators and they may die. We have witnessed what can happen when the spread of the virus causes a “surge” in healthcare demand in hospitals and overloads healthcare systems. It is important to avoid that at all costs. This is called “flattening the curve” which means to spread out the time that the virus spreads so fewer people are impacted at one time. The less interaction people have with people outside their homes, the less likely the spread of the virus.

Q: Why can't I get tested?

Q: Are there enough tests in our area?

Q: When will testing be more available?

A: We have a limited number of test kits, but enough to meet current demands for high risk patients as determined by NC DHHS guidance: testing only high priority patients, which at this time includes healthcare personnel, hospital patients and long-term care facilities. Our hope is that testing capacity will increase in the next couple of weeks to broaden testing options.

Q: I have to work, how is it you are telling me I have to stay home for so long?

A: The decisions being made to “Stay Home” and “Shelter in Place” are based on experiences of other regions in the world. This is a hardship for many people. Please call 2-1-1 to find charitable organizations in our community. There are also small business loans and the Governor has made it easier to get unemployment payments. Please visit des.nc.gov to file a claim or get information.

Q: Should I wear a mask everywhere I go?

A: Yes, because you could have the infection and be spreading it. Recently, there has been suggestion that masks would be helpful to keep from spreading it by people who are carriers but don't have symptoms. If you have access to a face covering, and it makes you feel safer, wear it. Please do not hoard masks at the expense of healthcare providers and first responders. It is a concern that people may feel overconfident if they're wearing a face covering. If you use a cloth mask, make sure you clean it regularly.

Q: How do you prioritize what you go out of your home for and what you don't? Like visit with some friends but not others? It would be great to have a list of vetting questions to use to decide when to NOT stay home.

A: The Governor has issued a “Stay at Home” order. This means that people should only go to work if their jobs are deemed essential and people should stay home except to get food and necessities. You should not visit with ANYONE that you don't already live with.

Q: Do you think our health care area is prepared for COVID-19?

A: Henderson County is blessed to have two great hospitals and their leadership has been working closely with the Health Department, other healthcare providers and Emergency Management to prepare and plan as needs arise.

Q: Is it safer to meet outside than inside?

A: It's best to only interact with people you already live with. If you go to the woods or for a walk in the park, stay at least 6' away from others as you walk by.

There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19, make sure you are getting your information from trusted sources.

The flood of information can make it difficult to separate fact from fiction, and in a rapidly evolving situation such as this, rumors and misinformation can be dangerous. It's natural for people to search for answers and information in times of uncertainty.

Credible sources: www.CDC.gov and www.NCDHHS.gov

North Carolina Coronavirus Hotline: 1-866-462-3821 (staffed by nurses and pharmacists 24/7)

Henderson County Nurse Triage Lines: Pardee UNC Health 828-694-8048 and AdventHealth 828-681-2300

Don't fall for claims about remedies that will immunize or cure you of the disease. While there isn't currently a vaccine or cure for coronavirus, there is a lot that you can still do to protect yourself and your health. Many of these are common practices that you already do every day (from www.CDC.gov):

Avoid close contact.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for cancer survivors and people with [other serious chronic conditions, who are at higher risk of getting very sick.](#)
- Avoid crowded locations like malls, theaters, and sports venues.

Keep your hands clean.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places—elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.

Make sure your health care team is also taking steps to protect you from exposures.

- Your health care providers should also practice frequent hand washing and, in some cases, wear masks, gowns, and/or gloves to avoid exposing you to bacteria, viruses, and other infection-causing agents.
- There is a wealth of information for cancer patients currently receiving [treatment, cancer survivors, caregivers, and health care providers on how to prevent infection and support wellness on CDC's preventcancerinfections.org.](#)

Clean and disinfect.

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

Avoid Nonessential travel.

- [Visit CDC's site](#) for the latest information and travel risks and restrictions.

Taking just a few precautions now is your best defense in preventing and avoiding illness from this novel coronavirus.